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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 679

[Docket No. 101126521-0640-02]

RIN 0648-XA955

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Pacific Cod by
Catcher/Processors Using Pot Gear in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management
Area

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and
Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Temporary rule; closure.

SUMMARY: NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for Pacific cod by pot
catcher/processors in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands management area (BSAI).

This action is necessary to prevent exceeding the A season apportionment of the 2012
Pacific cod total allowable catch (TAC) specified for pot catcher/processors in the BSAI.

DATES: Effective 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), January 23, 2012, through 1200
hrs, A.l.t., September 1, 2012.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Josh Keaton, 907-586-7228.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: NMFS manages the groundfish fishery in the
BSAI exclusive economic zone according to the Fishery Management Plan for
Groundfish of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area (FMP) prepared by
the North Pacific Fishery Management Council under authority of the Magnuson-Stevens

Fishery Conservation and Management Act. Regulations governing fishing by U.S. vessels in accordance with the FMP appear at subpart H of 50 CFR part 600 and 50 CFR part 679.

The A season apportionment of the 2012 Pacific cod TAC allocated as a directed fishing allowance to pot catcher/processors in the BSAI is 1,777 metric tons as established by the final 2011 and 2012 harvest specifications for groundfish in the BSAI (76 FR 11139, March 1, 2011) and inseason adjustment (76 FR 81875, December 29, 2011).

In accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(iii), the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS, has determined that the A season apportionment of the 2012 Pacific cod TAC allocated as a directed fishing allowance to pot catcher/processors in the BSAI has been reached. Consequently, NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for Pacific cod by pot catcher/processors in the BSAI.

After the effective date of this closure the maximum retainable amounts at § 679.20(e) and (f) apply at any time during a trip.

Classification

This action responds to the best available information recently obtained from the fishery. The Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, NOAA (AA), finds good cause to waive the requirement to provide prior notice and opportunity for public comment pursuant to the authority set forth at 5 U.S.C. 553(b)(B) and § 679.25(c)(1)(ii) as such requirement is impracticable and contrary to the public interest. This requirement is impracticable and contrary to the public interest as it would prevent NMFS from responding to the most recent fisheries data in a timely fashion and would delay the

closure of Pacific cod by pot catch processors in the BSAI. NMFS was unable to publish a notice providing time for public comment because the most recent, relevant data only became available as of January 19, 2012.

The AA also finds good cause to waive the 30-day delay in the effective date of this action under 5 U.S.C. 553(d)(3). This finding is based upon the reasons provided above for waiver of prior notice and opportunity for public comment.

This action is required by § 679.20 and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1801 et seq.

Dated: January 20, 2012

Steven Thur,
Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries,
National Marine Fisheries Service.

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